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*70 Years*  
*"A Partner in Conservation Since 1935"*

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**Transmitted via Email**

October 5, 2005

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-6-2

**SUBJECT: LTP – CSP – GUIDANCE FOR VERIFICATION OF 2005 CSP CONTRACTS  
PRIOR TO ISSUING 2006 PAYMENTS**

Purpose. To inform NRCS employees of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) contract and conservation plan requirements and expectations of CSP participants.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2006

The national office is developing additional guidance on the process to make 2006 CSP payments. Prior to making these payments field staff will need to verify all new CSP contracts. Hopefully the verification process will lead to maintaining high quality CSP contracts and conservation plans that will help approved participants understand the program's requirements, meet their contract obligations and verify that there are no discrepancies between the program's requirements and the producer's expectations...

Listed below are several items that need to be addressed BEFORE the payment of 2006 contracts:

- Field verification of the conservation plan and contract
  - A field (on-site) verification of all new CSP conservation plans will be made as soon as possible, preferably this fall. This is a conservation planning activity, meant to assure that the CSP program is successful and that there are no embarrassments to the program in any of the contracts
  - If you have been on the farm recently or did field verifications during sign up, and know the status of the farm or portion of the farm that is in the contract, another field visit is not necessary. If you have not seen the farm, then a field visit is needed. The in-field verification will be confirming that those obvious minimum eligibility requirements have been met such as crop rotation, residue management, and ephemeral and classic gully control.
  - Producers were required to identify the practices/activities that they had installed or were doing on their operation in order to determine their eligibility and category status. As stated in the appendix of the CCC-1200, the participant must maintain at least the level of stewardship identified in the benchmark for the entire contract period. If you have not already done so, verify with the producer on the enrollment

category sheet which practices and activities that the producer currently has on their operation. When appropriate (mainly for management practices and activities) the producer must provide documentation that they have completed the identified actions and that they are maintaining these actions. Where appropriate all category practices and activities will also be field verified.

- By signing the CCC-1200, the participant also agreed “to modify or update an existing practice, if necessary, to meet minimum Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) practice standards within 12 months after the date of determination that the practice does not meet the standard.” Therefore, if the field verification determines that a practice does not meet NRCS standards, the producer has 1 year to modify or update that practice.
- The verification is to be documented in the conservation assistance notes and contract review form LTP-013. If you find that something was overlooked and needs correction (such as a gully that needs treatment and was not identified in the contract), schedule the needed practice to correct the problem.
- There have been concerns voiced regarding the CSP nutrient management requirements and several of you have had participants request additional instructions and details to explain what they are required (or allowed) to apply for fertilizer this fall. This is probably happening because participants have not developed a nutrient management plan. Most participants were told how their eligible fields met the water quality criteria but they do not fully understand the criteria or how to determine the amount of fertilizer they can apply and still remain in compliance with the program's guidelines. It's a good idea for all participants to develop detailed nutrient management plans but we will not require this as a condition of program eligibility. However, CSP participants must follow the 2005 CSP Nutrient Management guidance and this check sheet for Nutrient Management or its equivalent must be provided to each participant.
- All participants placed in Tier III or wanting to transition to Tier III must be determined to meet the FOTG Resource Management System (RMS) criteria (**on all eligible acres**). These criteria will include the following;
  - All fields must have soil loss controlled to T;
  - There should be no eroded channels;
  - All streambank, major gully and/or ditch erosion should be contained;
  - All farmsteads and feedlots must have adequate shelterbelts;
  - There should be no unfiltered surface inlets;
  - Irrigated cropland and pasture must have a water use index of at least 50;
  - The operation must have living snow fences, where needed.
  - Threatened and endangered species and species of concern, if identified on-site must be adequately protected;
  - Invasive species must be addressed and noxious weeds must be controlled;
  - The producer must answer “yes” to all questions on the Self-Assessment Tool for Riparian Corridors;
  - The producer must answer “yes” to all questions that relate to their operation on the Self-Assessment Tool for Wildlife;

- Must fully meet all FOTG requirements for the 590 and 595 practices; and must successfully complete the “CSP Benchmark Water Quality Practices” sheet that deals with production areas and handling of products.
  - livestock must not have direct unmanaged access to riparian areas
- All Tier III contracts and transitional offers must be verified as meeting the requirements by a NRCS certified planner.
- Each approved participant will be signing enhancement job sheets and providing the required documentation as part of the payment process.
- To earn a new enhancement payment the applicant must have successfully implemented the required activity. In most cases applicants haven’t had sufficient time to fully implement a new enhancement in calendar year 2006 which would make them eligible to receive a payment. Contact Leah Duzy prior to scheduling a new enhancement for payment in 2006.
- There have been several questions concerning the CSP enhancement payment for delayed haying. Listed below is the guidance for payment of this enhancement.

If the new seeding will occur in the spring or summer of 2006 the producer could not delay harvest until 2007 they would then be eligible to receive payment for this enhancement in 2008.

Also, if the new seeding will occur in August 2006 they could delay harvest until 2007 and be subsequently paid in 2008.

Direct questions on the information in this bulletin to Paul Flynn, SRC at (651) 602-7870

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State Conservationist

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